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Lambda Letters Project

32572

Vol. 3, No. 8 August, 1995 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608 Phone (916) 965-6851

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Make no mistake, this is not just a frivolous promotion in support of fun and games. We are engaged in a titanic struggle with the forces of conservatism and bigotry that stalk our land. We face a world in which open bigotry has again become fashionable. For example, note how little censure occurred when a member of the House of Representatives called Congressmember Barney Frank, Barney "Fag," or when Senator Jesse Helms spoke on the floor of the U.S. Senate and called gays "perverts." Legislators and other elected officials are stoking the fires of prejudice among the public in the hopes of riding a wave of prejudice into public office. Governor Wilson is certainly doing that with his stands on immigration and affirmative action. To combat these evils, it is absolutely essential that Lambda Letters and similar organizations grow and become very much larger and more effective than they already are.

One of the things most likely to gain the attention of an elected official is huge volumes of mail from voters taking one side or another on a public issue. In the first six months of this year Lambda Letters col-

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

June, 1995	4,478 letters
This year	17,221 letters

Dollars Spent

June, 1995	$718
This year	$7,305

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

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Faces of Sacramento

Entertainment Books

Continued from page 1

lected over 17,000 letters and, with your help, we have collected over 111,000 letters since our founding. You can be very proud of those accomplishments because you made them happen. But Lambda Letters must grow very much larger to meet the challenges before us more effectively. That takes money. We need to sell Entertainment Books like never before to cover our costs and provide funds for continuing the growth in the number of letters we collect.

The Sacramento Entertainment Books are due to arrive on August 23rd and the books for the rest of the state will arrive soon thereafter. They are positively crammed with 2-for-1 and 50%-off coupons that are good at restaurants, theaters, hotels, airlines, car rental agencies, and more. All coupons are valid as soon as the books are issued.

Help us grow and serve you better. Order your Entertainment Book today. Take advantage of our volume buyer's offer. Get a free Entertainment Book for yourself or share the savings among your friends by submitting a volume order.

Please use the back of the flyer attached to this newsletter to send us your order. Contact us to let us know that you will help us sell Entertainment Books. Who knows, you might be the one to win the free resort weekend!

Working together, we can make your will known and served in the halls of government!

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Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue
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Send payment and your camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, to:
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Deadline is the 25th of each month.

Almost-Last Opportunity to Demand Inclusive Health Texts

On July 26th and 27th the California Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission (CCDSMC) held public hearings on proposed health education materials for use in the state's schools for the next 5–7 years. The CCDSMC will forward their recommendations to the State Board of Education, which will hold public hearings on these recommendations in September. This month we are asking you to write to the Board of Education and demand that they adopt only materials which are inclusive of full, fair, accurate, and diverse information about gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, sexual orientation, and sexuality. Textbooks adopted by California affect publishing nationwide because of the economics of publishing.

According to a recent survey conducted by the American Association of University Women, U.S. schoolchildren fear being called "gay" more than any other harassment they face in school. Until we reduce the homophobic bias in textbooks, we will have to continue pouring more money into suicide hotlines, counseling programs, and antiviolence campaigns. By contrast, public education offers the most humane and cost-effective means for dealing with homophobic bigotry.

The National Education Association passed a resolution in July, 1994, proposing development of education programs that would attend to, but not be limited to, accurate portrayal of the roles and contributions of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people throughout history, with acknowledgment of their sexual orientation; acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and the awareness of sexual stereotyping whenever sexuality or tolerance of diversity is taught; and elimination of sexual orientation–related name-calling and jokes in the classroom. If the teachers are willing to help us in this fight, then we must do everything we can to provide them with textbooks untainted with homophobic biases.

In 1992, the California State Board of Education adopted a "Health Framework for California Schools." This document mandates that health education "presents current, accurate data, recognizes similarities and differences among students, is culturally appropriate, and makes the curriculum acceptable." It also states that "regardless of differences in age, culture, disability, ethnic background, gender, primary language, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background, the students understand that the knowledge, skills, and behaviors discussed in class apply to *all* students. Differences should also be discussed, but care . . . taken not to emphasize them to the point of divisiveness."

Despite this broad mandate, it is unlikely that the inclusive health education materials will be approved. This is our *next-to-last chance* to demand inclusive health texts. State education policy makers seem to be loathe to approve classroom materials which tell the truth about sexual orientation and homophobia. Their failure to do so represents abandonment of their responsibility to provide young people with this information.

This is really a life and death matter. We must find a way to teach our gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth that they are normal and deserving of respect by our society, and we must teach "straight" youth that a bias against "queers" is a societal illness. We must teach all youth honestly and accurately about sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS.

Health materials being proposed for use in California's classrooms are on display at Learning Resource Display Centers (LRDCs) throughout the state. You can visit these centers and critique what they display. Call the CCDSMC at (916) 657-3207 or Project 21 at (510) 601-8883 to find out where the location of the nearest LRDC is to you. We need to voice our opinions, because you can be sure that the religious right will visit these LRDCs and make *their* voices known!

We can make a huge difference in the lives of schoolchildren, queer or not, by standing up now for objectivity and inclusiveness in health education. "Out" young people deserve our help in establishing self-esteem. Straight youth need the facts if they are to avoid the dangerous social illness that is homophobia. This disease advances when our public school systems ignore the truth and refuse to teach that same-sex orientation is natural and normal. The lack of balance in textbooks and teaching perpetuates ignorance and prejudice, and takes advantage of impressionable young minds. Whenever we fail to teach the truth today, we pay for it tomorrow—many times over.

HIV/AIDS Issue

Ryan White CARE Act Reauthorization in Trouble

Since 1990 the Ryan White CARE Act has provided federal money to local communities for a wide variety of HIV/AIDS-related activities. One of the key components of the CARE Act is that it authorizes local, citizen-run community groups to decide how these monies should be spent in their own areas. It also funds such activities as patient care, community-based clinics for early intervention services and primary care, and innovative health delivery programs—such as home treatments—for persons living with AIDS.

Unfortunately, spending authorization for the CARE Act runs out this year, and reauthorization has become caught up in partisan politics, anti-AIDS hysteria, and the general budget-cutting mood of Congress. The reauthorization vote was originally scheduled for, and should have taken place in, March or April; it is still pending.

In the Senate, full floor hearings on Senators Kassebaum's and Kennedy's reauthorization bill were finally held on July 24th. Notwithstanding Senator Helms' best efforts to thwart the bill from passing, the bill survived reasonably intact and without inappropriate amendments attached to it.

In the House, H.R. 1872, which reauthorizes the CARE Act, was unanimously reported out of the Commerce Committee. However, to survive without major cuts and negative amendments from homophobes such as Rep. Bob Dornan, the bill badly needs bipartisan support and cosponsors. Currently the bill's two original authors (Bliley and Dingell) are its only sponsors. Thus this month's letter is asking California's House members to support and cosponsor this bill.

Eventually the Senate and House versions will need to be reconciled, but rapid passage of the Ryan White CARE Act reauthorization is critical to the AIDS community—indeed to all Americans.

Women's Issue

Most Basic Health Coverage Sought

There are many bills regarding women's health care currently sitting in committees in Congress. Most of these bills have not seen any activity for months since they took a back seat to other, more high-profile, issues, such as block-grant funding proposals. After reading over these bills, we have chosen H.R. 173 as this month's women's issue, since it is well-written, it proposes coverage of the most basic health care service for poor women, and it needs our support right now.

H.R. 173, also known as the "Medicaid Women's Basic Health Coverage Act of 1995," is currently sitting in the Subcommittee on Health and Environment and has not been discussed since the end of January. With the current debate in Congress over whether to turn the Medicaid program into a system of block grants to the states, now is the time to bring this bill back to life—before it is too late.

Already this year over 50,000 women have died from breast or ovarian cancer. With all that we know about how early detection can prevent cancer deaths, it is quite surprising to discover that mammograms and pap smear screenings are not covered under the Medicaid program as a basic health care service.

This month's letter drive is directed to the two California Representatives who sit on that Subcommittee: Henry Waxman (D-Los Angeles) and Brian Bilbray (R-San Diego). We are asking them to do two things—support H.R. 173 and bring it to a vote, and make sure it gets included in any Medicaid block grant proposals.

Due to the significant threat that breast and ovarian cancers pose to women, mammograms and pap smear screening exams should be considered a basic health care service. As such, they should be covered under the Medicaid program to ensure that low-income women have access to these exams. Please sign your letter urging your Representative to revive and support this important bill.
(Source: *Cancer Facts and Figures—1995,* American Cancer Society.)

Please Support Affirmative Action

Please write to your member of the House of Representatives to oppose two bills that would eliminate affirmative action in federal hiring, contracting, and educational scholarship programs. These bills are H.R. 1764 (David Funderburk, R-NC) and H.R. 1840 (George Radanovich, R-CA). Your Representative's name and address are shown on the enclosed sample letter.

Here's why this issue is so important. Affirmative action was begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s because people realized that women and ethnic minorities were being denied equal access to jobs, government contracts, and educational opportunities. The purpose of affirmative action laws is simply to assure that women and minorities have full access to these opportunities. The laws were vigorously enforced during the 1970s, but neglected—and sometimes even opposed by the federal government—during the Reagan-Bush years. By the late 1970s minority employment rose 20 percent compared to the beginning of the decade, and the employment of women by employers with government contracts rose 15 percent, but only 2 percent elsewhere.

To some people this means that affirmative action is no longer necessary. One look at the facts in the box to the right should disprove that notion. The sad fact is that prejudice is still strong in our nation and still prevents women and minorities from sharing equally in the blessings and benefits of the American dream. Countless studies by organizations as diverse as the Urban Institute,

Continued on page 9

If African-Americans enjoyed parity with Whites . . .

- *the average black family would earn $19,568 more per year.*
- *the average black male would earn $8,566 more per year.*
- *the average black female would earn $2,091 more per year.*

There would be . . .

- *1.1 million more black men working year-round, full-time.*
- *853,240 more black executives, administrators, and managers.*
- *72,248 more black lawyers.*
- *66,416 more black mathematical and computer scientists.*
- *49,612 more black doctors.*
- *280,448 more black construction workers.*
- *57,715 more blacks with bachelor's degrees and 21,076 more blacks with master's degrees.*
- *959,420 fewer unemployed black adults.*

Source: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc., from U.S. Census Bureau, Federal Reserve, and Centers for Disease Control data.

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Same-Sex Marriage Signature Gatherers Still Needed

Lambda Letters still needs volunteers to gather signatures on postcards supporting same-sex marriage. As we reported in our May newsletter, the Hawaii Supreme Court has issued a preliminary ruling that Hawaii cannot legally ban same-sex marriages. A final ruling from that court is expected sometime next year, or in early 1997.

If their final ruling is in favor of same-sex marriage, lesbian and gay couples will be able to go to Hawaii to get married. Under present law, California would be required to recognize such marriages. However, many legal scholars think California could overturn this gain by passing a simple law stating that only marriages which meet the standards of California law will be recognized in California—which states that only people of the opposite gender may marry. Such a new law would steal our victory.

If we win in Hawaii, it is highly likely that the California Legislature will seek to pass legislation to take our victory away and they are very likely to pass such legislation unless we provide massive input urging them not to do so.

Lambda Letters has prepared postcards to the Governor and the Legislature urging them not to ban same-sex marriage. Many of you have signed them. We have also brought them to pride festivals seeking people's signatures—so far collecting a total of 1,568 signed postcards! However, many, many more than that will be necessary to stop the steamroller against same-sex marriage.

Please consider bringing copies of our postcards to your friends, to meetings you attend, or to any other place where you might gather signatures. We will be delighted to send you a supply of postcards for gathering signatures. As always, we will provide you with a stamped, addressed envelope for use in returning the signed cards to us. Help us out. Protect your right to marry whomever you choose. Help us gather signatures!

Volunteer Legislative Analyst Needed

Lambda Letters needs a volunteer to compose our person of color sample letter and the article explaining the letter each month. The volunteer would also contact various groups to seek their advice on what subjects need to be covered by our letters. Lambda Letters can provide a list of such groups. The volunteer would be asked to attend monthly staff meetings in Sacramento (1–2 hours) and quarterly Board meetings, also in Sacramento. Time spent on the job averages 4–5 hours per month.

Prior experience is not necessary, but the person selected must have good written communications skills. This is an important opportunity to influence the issues covered by Lambda Letters each month and affect the way that legislators respond to the needs of the people of color community.

Please contact us today and let us know whether you can help us in this important way. Include a note with your letters or call us at (916) 965-6851. A duty statement is available upon request.

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Prop. 187 Stalled Again

In July, a federal appeals court panel ruled that a U.S. District Judge acted properly in blocking implementation of most parts of Prop. 187 prior to an upcoming federal trial to determine the immigration initiative's constitutionality. This was a major setback for Governor Wilson and Attorney General Dan Lundgren who have loudly championed the initiative. The federal trial was due to begin on July 26, but no results from that hearing were available at press time.

Prop. 187 is, of course, a controversial issue and even many of our members have expressed support for it. However, Lambda Letters has opposed the initiative because of the hardship it imposes on innocent children who would be denied health care and an education through no fault of their own, and because it would create a growing underclass of people of color with inadequate health care.

Aside from the callousness of letting people die or suffer without adequate care, our neglect of the poor would create a vast reservoir of communicable diseases, such as the new and virulent strain of tuberculosis, which would be a clear and present danger to all of society, not just to those in the illegal alien population. T.B. is easy to pass from one person to another. In addition, children of undocumented parents, who are thrown out of school, land on the streets with nothing to do—except perhaps turn to crime. Most physical violence against gays and lesbians is perpetrated by teenage boys with too little to do.

We hope you will oppose any further attempts to impose Proposition 187 or similar legislation on the state of California.

Join Our E-mail Alert System

Do you have access to e-mail? If so, you might consider joining our E-mail Alert System. Each month people on the system receive information about fast-breaking issues of concern to the community. Often these are issues that need immediate input from you to your legislators. Waiting to tell you about it in the next newsletter is too late.

Each time we issue an alert, we provide background information on the issue, along with a sample letter or message for you to use in contacting your legislator. We also provide the names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and (when available) the e-mail addresses of the legislators who need to hear from you. This is an important way for you to increase the community's clout with the Legislature.

To join our E-mail Alert System, please send your request to us at the following: *boyceh1021@aol.com.*

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PSY10426

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We're Stamp Collectors

Frequently people send us notes suggesting that we not put stamps on the return envelopes we send to them. Often they say they cannot afford to make a cash contribution to the Project but could help us out by putting their own stamps on the return envelopes.

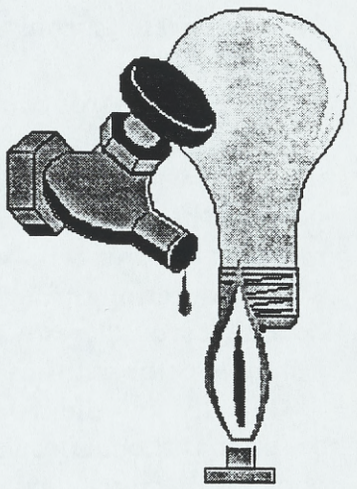
We appreciate the good intentions of these members. However, typically 75–80 percent of our members return letters to us each month. From everything we hear, this indicates an astonishingly good rate of return. The fact that people don't even have to search for a stamp to return their letters to us is probably an important part of why we have such a good success rate.

Each month our volunteers stuff, seal, and batch letters and newsletters for mailing to over 750 people. All of this is done in about an hour and a half in one evening. Remembering to send return envelopes with stamps to some people and without stamps to others would complicate that process immensely. We appreciate the good intentions of those making the suggestion, but we just can't do it.

However, the Lambda Letters Project does use many 32-cent stamps for other correspondence. For these purposes, please feel free to send us stamps whenever you like!

Governor Wilson Signs Lifeline Utility Bill

In July we asked you to send letters addressed to Governor Wilson asking him to sign S.B. 248, authored by Senator Hayden (D–Los Angeles). This bill adds people who are being treated for life-threatening diseases, or who have a compromised immune system, to the list of people who qualify to obtain minimum rates for gas or electricity.



With your help we delivered almost 500 letters to the Governor and he signed the bill. It will go into effect on January 1, 1996. Senator Hayden's office expresses their thanks to you all. They say our letters helped persuade the Governor to sign the bill. There was strong support for the bill throughout the legislative process, and it passed in both houses of the Legislature without a dissenting vote. What do you know, they all got it right this time! The next task is for AIDS service organizations to get the word out to persons living with AIDS and their health care providers that they are actually eligible for these lower utility rates.

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Affirmative Action Support

Continued from page 5

state agencies, the news media, and the U.S. Department of Justice have found that significant levels of prejudice against Hispanics and blacks still exist in the labor market. In studies conducted by the University of Chicago, employers openly admitted that they will not hire black people because they feel that blacks don't want to work, are violent, and prefer public assistance to employment.

Gains have been made, but when government stops enforcing affirmative action, the gains slip away. For example, by the end of the 1970s, when affirmative action was vigorously enforced, the average African-American college graduate, working year-round and full-time, made 81 percent of his white male counterpart's salary. By the end of the Reagan-Bush years of the 1980s, the African-American college graduate was earning only 74 percent of the salary of white male college graduates.

Some say that affirmative action forces employers to hire less qualified women or minorities when a white male might be more qualified. If this were true, productivity would go down in these workplaces. Numerous studies show that this has not happened. Nor have white males lost their substantial advantages. White males make up only 37 percent of the adult population, yet they comprise 59 percent of all chief executives, 65 percent of all physicians, 71 percent of all lawyers, and 85 percent of all supervisors in the construction industry. Clearly, affirmative action has not denied white males access to these high paying jobs!

We still need affirmative action. Please support it by opposing legislation that seeks to end this important program.

In Sacramento County (916) 564-8701

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30

Arbess Williams and Her Blues Gents, 9:00 PM - 1:00 AM

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31

The Chrome Addicts, 9:00 PM - 1:00 AM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Fem-2-Fem, 11:30 PM - 12:30 AM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Kym Sims, 11:30 PM - 12:30 AM

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

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Melonnee Desiree and the Promises
The Gina Livingston Band

LaWanda Page, 11:00 PM

CONTESTS

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Men's Wet T-Shirt

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